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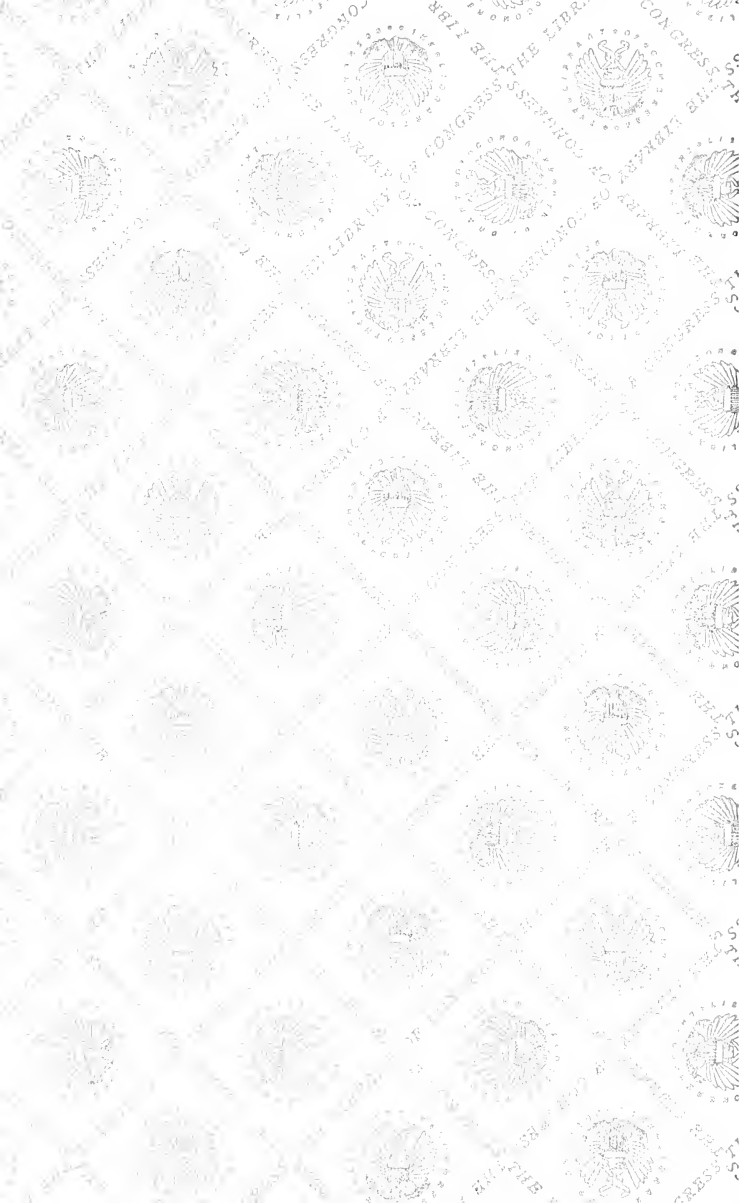
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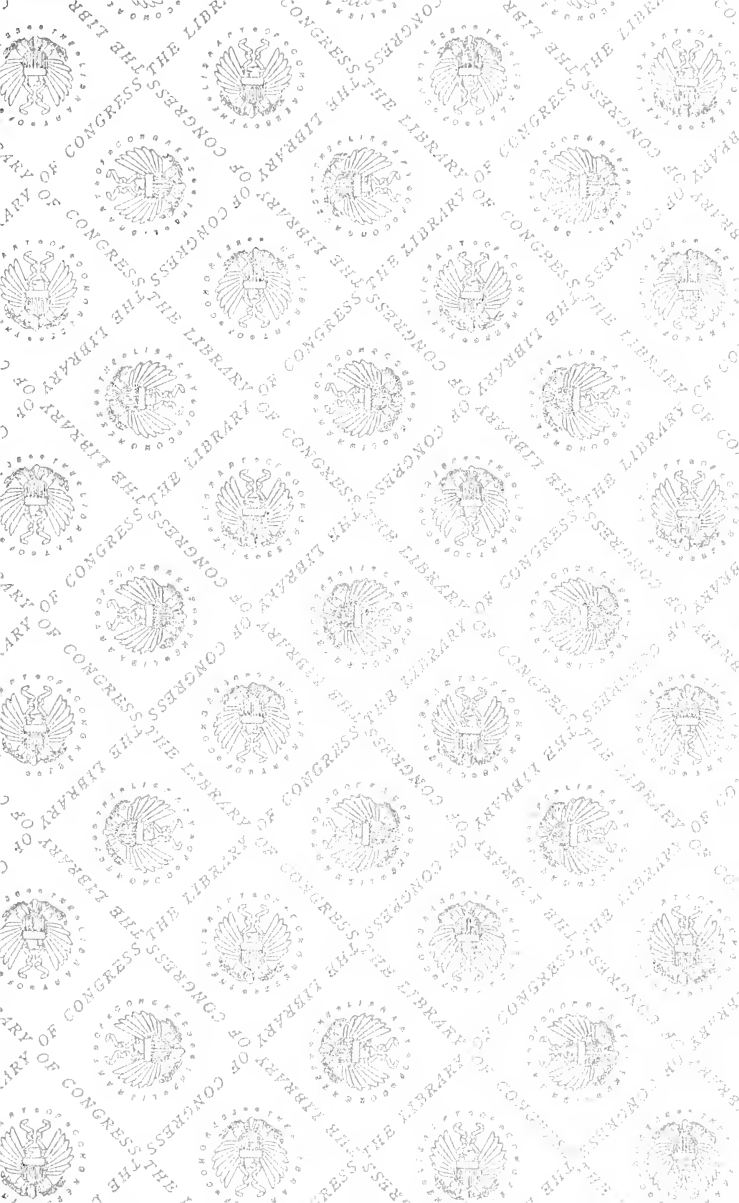
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OUR MERCIES OF RE-OCCUPATION.

A THANKSGIVING SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, PHILADELPHIA,

NOVEMBER 26, 1863.

BY

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

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PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM S. & ALFRED MARTIEN,

606 CHESTNUT STREET.

1863.

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PHILADELPHIA, November 27th, 1863.

REV. PHILLIPS BROOKS,

Dear Sir—We beg to request for publication a copy of the Sermon which you delivered on Thanksgiving Day, in the Church of the Holy Trinity.

Very respectfully,

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| STEPHEN COLWELL, | JOHN CLAYTON, |
| HORACE BINNEY, JR. | JAY COOKE, |
| GEORGE M. STROUD, | HENRY C. LEA, |
| HENRY C. CAREY, | A. E. BORIE, |
| GEORGE H. STUART, | L. MONTGOMERY BOND, |
| WILLIAM M. MEREDITH, | EDWIN M. LEWIS, |
| LEMUEL COFFIN, | C. B. BARCLAY, |
| MORTON McMICHAEL, | J. I. CLARK HARE, |
| EDWARD S. WHELEN, | CHARLES GIBBONS, |
| LEWIS R. ASHHURST, | J. FISHER LEAMING, |
| THOMAS H. POWERS, | HENRY C. BOND, |
| FAIRMAN ROGERS, | J. M. BIDDLE, |
| W. R. LEJEE, | C. L. BORIE, |
| M. W. BALDWIN, | WILLIAM WISTER, |
| JOHN ASHHURST, | E. W. CLARK, |
| SAUNDERS LEWIS, | GEORGE WHITNEY, |
| CADWALADER BIDDLE, | J. G. FELL, |
| J. FORSYTH MEIGS, M. D. | F. A. CONLY, |
| EVANS ROGERS, | THOMAS A. BIDDLE, |
| ARTHUR G. COFFIN, | B. GERHARD, |
| H. PRATT McKEAN, | W. M. TILGHMAN, |
| ISAAC HAZLEHURST, | GIBSON PEACOCK, |
| E. OTIS KENDALL, | CHARLES H. WELLING, |
| THEODORE FROTHINGHAM, | CHRISTOPHER WETHERILL, |
| EDWARD H. TROTTER, | JAMES H. ORNE, |
| WM. H. ASHHURST, | J. B. NEWMAN, |
| F. FRALEY, | LINDLEY SMYTH, |
| WM. P. CRESSON, | RICHARD L. ASHHURST, |
| W. DWIGHT BELL, | SOLOMON W. ROBERTS, |
| WM. D. LEWIS, | STEPHEN A. CALDWELL, |
| JAMES L. CLAGHORN, | THOMAS B. WATTSON. |
| JOHN B. THAYER, | |

LOCUST STREET, Thursday, December 3, 1863.

GENTLEMEN :

I herewith place my Thanksgiving Sermon at your disposal.

Yours very truly,

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

Mr. STEPHEN COLWELL,
Mr. HORACE BINNEY, JR.,
and others.

S E R M O N .

Jeremiah xvi. 14, 15.

THEREFORE, BEHOLD, THE DAYS COME, SAITH THE LORD, THAT IT SHALL NO MORE BE SAID, THE LORD LIVETH, THAT BROUGHT UP THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; BUT, THE LORD LIVETH, THAT BROUGHT UP THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FROM THE LAND OF THE NORTH. AND FROM ALL THE LANDS WHITHER HE HAD DRIVEN THEM: AND I WILL BRING THEM AGAIN INTO THEIR LAND WHICH I GAVE UNTO THEIR FATHERS.

WE are assembled to give thanks to God to-day, under new circumstances, with new blessings that call on us for a new song of praise. If this old Puritan Thanksgiving Day, now become a national institution, is to be a genuine and vital thing, it is necessary first of all that it should commemorate each year that year's peculiar mercies. The earnest men who started such a practice, had far too constant and reverent a sense of God to desire that this annual observance ever should degenerate into a mere stereotyped and formal repetition of the well-worn thanks that other generations have long rendered up for long past mercies. They believed in such an ever-fresh Providence as should leave no year empty-handed of its own peculiar blessings. I

think that they were right. I think so more than ever, when I look back and see how immensely the mercies for which we are to render thanks to-day surpass in their character those of any previous year. I accept it as a grateful, though not an easy task, this morning, to try to define the new sort of the new privileges which we enjoy, to show how it exceeds any old sort of privilege for which our fathers rendered gratitude, and to commend it to your earnest, humble, and practical acknowledgment.

The benefactions of God, I am inclined to think, follow one general design. His highest benefits are always of the character of a re-occupation of some province of mercy, which has been inhabited before, but only partially realized and enjoyed. It would seem as if man always had to enter twice upon his heritage before he made it really his. Is not this the large scheme of the world's perfection? It started with the beauty and delight of Paradise; but the new creature, as it proved, was not yet fit to fill all the great design of Eden with the appropriate fulness of perfect life. He fell out of his imperfect mastership; but thenceforth through all his suffering, every struggle is always represented as a struggle for return; the final consummation is always a reëntrance into the original programme of the garden, and of the life of the first man created in the

image of God. And how beautifully the same plan is evident in the culture of any successful Christian life. A child starts with the unrealized purity and completeness of character that belongs to childhood. Because it is unrealized, the man wanders out of it and loses it—and then for the old world-worn creature stumbling his way back, there is no higher mercy than this mercy of re-occupation, no higher grace than that by which we must all “be converted and become as little children.”

Two verses from Jeremiah bring before us another illustration of the same idea in the history of the Jews. Israel had been brought into the promised land years before. It had occupied that land in part, gathered out of it part of the comfort and culture and use it had to give. It had always thanked the Lord of the Red Sea and the Jordan for the power by which He brought their fathers in. In time the people's misuse of their land had led to their expulsion from it, and now their prophet comes to promise them a greater good. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that ye shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from all the lands whither he had driven them: I will bring them again into their land which I gave unto

their fathers.” He announces God’s policy, and it is once more a policy of re-occupation. Israel’s highest blessing is to be a restoral to a more perfect use and ownership of the same Canaan into which Joshua had led their fathers.

I have selected this passage for our text to-day, because, as I stand and look back over these last two years, I can find no truer description of the mercy that has filled them than just this—that it is the mercy of re-occupation. You will not find one natural blessing that we have not enjoyed for years. There is not an acre of our country now that was not ours in 1860. There is no principle of public law or social duty that was not written in our books three years ago. We hold no theories of virtue or of truth that our fathers did not hold and leave described for us most explicitly. There is no new realm of life; but yet I believe, and I shall try to show, that all through these last years, and especially through this last year, there has been a great drawing back of all of us to resume and fully occupy realms of life, blessings and duties which were never but half-occupied before. I hope to make this simple thought more plain as I go on, and to prove that I am right in stating as our appropriate subject for to-day, “Our Mercies of Re-occupation.”

And, first of all, we ought to render up our thanks

for the new power and completeness with which the ordinary blessings of God's natural providence have been received and realized, in consequence of the peculiar circumstances under which we have been living. When this war began, you know how heavy the air was with gloomy prophecies of the ruin that was to come upon us here at home, in the derangement of labor, in the scarceness of supplies, in the stoppage of business, in the insecurity of property. The war is almost three years old, and industry was never richer, homes were never happier, trade never paid so well, harvests never crowded the bursting barns more fully than in the abundant prosperity of this battle-autumn. What shall we do? Is it the part of earnest men just to come up to our churches and thank God for the corn-fields and the busy stores, and say nothing about the war, under whose red glare the sickle does its peaceful battle with the grain, and the quick dollars pile themselves upon your desk. I think not. I think no gratitude is loyal or reasonable that does not carry the earnestness and solemnity of all our present life into every thanksgiving that it has to pay. This prosperity is not like other prosperity. How many men have felt it. How, with the best part of our thriving merchants, you have seen the difference—the way in which their gain was not

taken as a matter of course, as it used to be, but the evident presence of God among us has made many a man, careless and utterly thoughtless before, take his unexpected fortune with something almost like reverence, as if he took it directly out of the open hand of the Almighty. This is the first re-occupation. We enter this year into our barns of plenty, and so much of the solemnity of the time clings about them, that we tread their floors as if we trod a church's aisle, and look round upon their old familiar plenty with a new sense that it all comes from God.

I know the exceptions just as well as you do. I know too well the sickening frivolity, (it is worse than that, the fool-hardy impiety,) that is daring to desecrate these solemn times with the flaunting of its selfish finery, and the wretched display of its new-made money; but there is a better side, and let us rejoice in that. There is a great sanctification of ordinary life and ordinary blessing by the extraordinary light that falls on them out of the supreme interests of our time. It must be so. No great apostolic cause ever walks through a nation's life, but little concerns creep up instinctively, and try to catch some shade of its grandeur—as of old, in Jerusalem, the sick came and were laid along the temple-courts, “if that the shadow of Peter passing

by might overshadow some of them.” Among the truest of the prosperity of our country in the years to come, will be that which has shared in the transfiguration of these sacred times—which has re-occupied its old treasure-houses, and found them temples sacred to diviner uses than it ever guessed—which has roused itself as, when God had been speaking words of blessing to him in Bethel, Jacob “waked out of his sleep, and said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.”

It seems to me every dollar made in these war-times ought to be sacred. I should think every man who is staying at home and making a fortune now, would want to take at least one poor man who has been to the war and been disabled; and, counting him his substitute, provide for him and his for life. A man who is coining money out of his country's agony, and keeping it to spend upon himself, must feel so like a very Gehazi. “Is it a time to receive money and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen?” When those whose duty to be there is no more than ours, are putting every comfort by and standing between us and the traitors, camping in the wretchedness of the cold open field, fighting in the front ranks of our thinned armies, suffering in the solitude of far-off hospitals, starving in that loathsome prison which

is going to make Southern civilization the everlasting by-word of the nineteenth century—what right have we to occupy the prosperity, under whose groaning portals we enter in with thanks to-day, save as the guardian holds his solemn trust, sacred from common use, ready to answer to the last demand of those for whom he holds it, to whom it all belongs.

And now to proceed. We come to speak of the more distinctively national blessings of re-occupation, for which God claims our thanks. Take your map and draw out of the fresh history of the past the line that bounded the part of our national inheritance which was occupied by our national authority two years ago; then draw another line, marking the limits of our power, military or civil, as it stands to-day; see what lies between them; what have been the blessings of re-occupation thus far in the struggle. When I hear men talking about the slowness of the war, the ineffectiveness of the war, I cannot but think that they are men who either have not made so simple an experiment, or are not very ready to acknowledge its results. Just see what we have gained. The great river, which *is* the lordly West, flows open with the light of the Union on it from source to sea. The queen city, that sits by its mouth to gather in its treasures, is not merely the

undisputed subject of the government, but is spreading the example of her subjectship over all the country region that has always looked to her for leading. The vast domain west of the Mississippi, with all its untold possibilities, if not all ours, is cut off from communication with the great centres of rebellion, and it is hard to keep up with the telegrams that tell us day by day of its progressive occupation by the power of the government. Down the broad heart of the continent, over those two States which, though they do not wear the name, constitute in truth the keystone of our broad arch, Kentucky and Tennessee, the two States that no power meaning to be a first-class power on this continent can afford to spare, the sweep of Union victory has reclaimed for ever the countries that belonged of right to freedom. This very morning, is there one of us that has not given thanks to God for the glad thanksgiving news that He has sent us? And in our own fair State we have a tale of re-occupation too to tell. That fearful invasion, which in the nature of things it was inevitable would come upon us sooner or later in the course of a rebellion such as this, has been swept ignominiously and disastrously back, and the silent graves on that hill-front at Gettysburg are voiceful with the promise that, come what will, free

Northern soil has felt the last footprint of the oppressor and invader.

What shall we say of all this vast re-occupation? What of the joy of such days as that last Fourth of July, and that strange Sunday that followed it, which not one of us is ever going to forget? Is it just that in the tide of ebbing accidents we have reëmbraced part of what we had lost, that the promise is as certain as a certainty that we shall re-embrace the whole and be just what we were before? Not so! God would not have brought us through it all simply for that. This re-occupation is to be greater, to make the region which it gives us more distinctly ours than it was by the first occupation. There is a distinct advance. The nation is just coming to its inheritance. If we do not see it, those who hereafter write the history of these times will. Those who come after us will look back and see that the work of this year was of greater moment in the history of the world than that of any revolutionary year; they will see that those years inevitably came to nothing without the completing processes of these. They will say no more, when they want to render highest praise—The Lord liveth which brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt—but, The Lord liveth which re-brought them from all the lands whither he had driven them, and in the agony

of the great rebellion times, completely and for ever set them in their land which he had given to their fathers.

But infinitely more important than the mere re-occupation of territory, vast as that is, is the resumption by this American people in a higher sense, the full occupation of the government of their fathers, the reëtrance into the principles and fundamental truths of the nationality which they inherited, but which up to the beginning of this war they had not begun worthily to occupy and use. It is the great growth of the people in this regard that makes one's heart bound fullest of thankfulness to God. Just see what some of these fundamental truths are. Take first our national independence. More than fourscore years ago this nation declared itself free and independent—the new ground of a new experiment in national, social, and individual life. It needs no very wise historian to tell how very partially that bright announcement has been fulfilled. We have never half claimed our independence. In our timid regard for foreign opinion, in our foolish aping of foreign folly, in our blind regard for foreign methods, even where the very difference of our position dictated new methods as better methods for the work we had to do, we have only very slightly made our own the high privilege of independent life.

Believe me, it will not be the least of the blessings that God sends us; if by any means, by a development of our own powers, by new exigencies leading us into the necessity of untried methods, by the individuality of suffering, (which is true of a nation just as of a man,) aye, even by the terrible disappointment which discovers the shallowness of loud-mouthed English philanthropy, by the selfishness of the old worlds that will not, or the blindness of the old worlds that cannot see how grand and holy a task a younger world is called to do, if by any means He gives us out of the isolation of our national struggle a larger entrance into the independent life, the separate and characteristic development of government, art, science, letters, practical religion, and social character, which is the wide domain into which he led our nation, and whose splendid size it has taken us almost a hundred years to find.

Take again the great republican idea, the idea of a people with mutual interests, meeting in self-regulated action and accomplishing one great result of government, which is in the largest sense a commonwealth. There has been a great re-occupation there. Never before since we were a people have we had one great absorbing interest which, overreaching old party issues, swept the popular heart away with that impulse of larger loyalty which is the essence of the

republican thought. True, we have our parties still. but everybody asks the questions of a republicanism that outgoes party, when he wants to find out what his neighbour is. We have got broader tests than we used to have. We know what it is to be loyal to our country now, and that is what we ask: not, Do you wear this or that badge? Are you called by this or that name? But, Are you for the Union? Are you for putting down the rebellion, let it cost what it will? Whatever your own associations, are you for an earnest, hearty, genuine support of that administration by whom, if it be carried on at all, this struggle of the nation with the traitor must be waged? That is the great republican question that men ask each other now. It is in the great *Yea* of the people to that question, and not in the success of any party. that we have rejoiced this fall. For as for parties, in themselves, they are very harmless, unimportant things. We shall always have them. We had them long before the war began; we shall have them long after it is over. They only become mischievous when they insist on a permanence beyond their use, and that, if they get it, is sure not to last long. Otherwise their evils are provided for by their continual changes. The same popular opinion which makes them in one form, in some new aggregation of it unmakes and remakes them differently. You know

how it is in a live and tumultuous ocean. The same life-force which makes the waves unmakes them every moment, and remakes them into new ones. All the time there will be waves, but all the time under the waves the power of the sea is active, by its same activity making, unmaking, and remaking for ever the billows by which it does its work. So in a live republic, the life-force of a universal loyalty underlying party waves, for ever makes, unmakes, and remakes them differently. Their constructive and destructive power is the same, this deeper force of which they are but the outputtings. So long as that deeper force is active, they are good and useful; so soon as it dies, they lose their life, grow rigid and tyrannical, and kill a nation out, as ours was dying before this influx of new loyalty came to save us.

I am proceeding from the lower to the higher, and now I come to the highest of all the re-occupations which by God's grace we have been permitted to make this year—the re-occupation of the disused duties and privileges of justice and liberty and human brotherhood.

You do not expect me, I do not think you want me, to stand here to-day without thanking God that the institution of African slavery in our beloved land is one big year nearer to its inevitable death than it was last thanksgiving day. On that day certain hopeful words were spoken from this pulpit

which groped about in the darkness, and timidly thought they saw the signs of light. To-day, will any man or woman blame us if we stand in the anticipation of certainty, and cry above the opened grave of slavery, that only waits till its corpse be brought to it with the decency its reverend age demands, Thank God! thank God! the hateful thing is dead! I am speaking solemnly; I am speaking earnestly; I am speaking as a man whose heart is too glad for utterance, in the washing from his country's robe, even though it be in the red water of her childrens' blood, of such a stain as she has worn before the nations through these years of her melancholy beauty. What has done it? Not the proclamation of last new year's day, (though we ought to thank God, as not the least mercy of these times, that we have a man to lead us, so honest, so true, so teachable at the lips of the Almighty, as to write those immortal words that made a race for ever free.) Not any public document, not any public act has done the work; nothing but the hand of God leading back His chosen people into the land of universal freedom, into which He led the fathers, and out of which the children so wofully went astray. Which God is greater, He who led the fathers in, or He who leads the children back? At any rate, the Lord grant us to be truer to the new charter of emancipation than (we own it with shamefacedness and contrition) we

have been to the declaration of freedom and human equality which the fathers wrote.

With regard to this whole slavery question, I do not mean to say much; not that there is not enough to say, but I do not see the need of saying it. I count the possibilities of the question to be sealed up and closed. This restored country is going to be a free country, past the power of accident, or malice, or prejudice to hinder. With this strange sight, the South urging on the North to the wisdom of emancipation, I may well leave to others to tell the blessings that the white man is going to feed on in this regenerated slaveless land. But speaking from the pulpit, putting this question on the highest ground, there is one distinction that belongs to us to draw. We hear so many people, even strong anti-slavery men, talking about the matter:—"Yes," they say, "Slavery is going fast, and we are glad of it. We shall be better off without it. The country will be richer. The Union will be safer. *Our* rejoicing is for the *white* man. It is not for the negro that we care." They make this last proviso in their creed most scrupulously. It seems to me it is a very mean, and low, and selfish one to make. It *is* for the negro that we care. It is our fault and not his, that he is here. It is our fault, inherited from the fathers, that has kept in most utter bondage, and most cruel bondage too, (I believe nobody doubts that now,)

generation after generation of men who have proved themselves the most patient, long-suffering, affectionate, and docile race of servants that ever lived, and who now, in the little glimmer of a chance that is given them, are standing between us and the rebels, fighting battles, receiving wounds, dying deaths that belong to us more than to them; fighting splendidly, working faithfully, learning eagerly, enduring endlessly, laying hold on a higher life with an eagerness that has no parallel in savage history. Let the politicians and the economists, dear friends, do what they will with all this question. Let us put it nowhere but on its highest ground. We rejoice in emancipation because it is *right*. We hate slavery because it is *wrong*. The negro ought to be free. He has a right to be free. God is showing us how to do it, and by His help we are doing it; casting this sin away, and reëntering, as He leads us, the high temple of human brotherhood, whence by His grace we will go no more out. That, and that alone, is the true ground to take, the high ground of Duty, which binds the conscience of our people to the cause of freedom.

And here I must not pass so quickly on as not to find time to thank God with you for another blessing. Not merely black men but white men have been freed this year. Slaveries have been broken that never felt an outward lash. Chains have been

snapped in sunder that the wearer had never known he wore, but which had eaten unseen to within a hair's breadth of the vitals of his truth and goodness. Do you ask me where? Tell me yourself. Is there no truth you would not have told your neighbor or yourself two years ago, that you say over now every time you talk of duty, every time you pray to God? Turn over the dust at your feet and see if there are not some bits of broken prejudices yet lying there. You never thought slavery was right! Why did you go about year after year among your fellow-men and never whisper that you knew it was utterly wrong, and that it ought to be got rid of by a consistent Christian people! Why, just stand up and breathe once in this fresh air of liberty, and see if you are not a freer man to breathe a full breath than you ever were before! "What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits to us!" He came and touched the great iron chain, and with a groan and a wrench it dropped away, and the man who knew his slavery knew that he was free. He came with subtler mercy; unseen, unfelt, he touched an unseen, unfelt fetter, and Oh, the emancipation that has followed to men that never knew they had been slaves! For these freed hands we thank our God to-day; for opened mouths, for liberated consciences, for men and women who have known the truth and been by it made free. Let it go on. We are not all free yet. Old frag-

ments of our servitude still cling about us; as, when a man comes out of a fever, it leaves him some memento, blindness or deafness or some kind of vexing poison in the blood. Let us get rid of these. If the negro is a man, and we have freed him in virtue of his manhood, what consistency or honor is it which still objects to his riding down the street in the same car with us if he is tired, or sitting in the same pew with us if he wants to worship God. Brethren, the world is not all saved yet. There are a few things still that "ought not so to be."

I should do great injustice to ourselves and to the day, if I did not commemorate another great re-occupation of this past year, whereby not only the people but the Church has entered in and repossessed the old land that the Lord gave to her fathers. Christianity, I believe, will never cease to sorrow that the Church of Christ was led and not leading in the crusade against human slavery in the United States. The future historian of the Church will look back and wonder at the sight he sees. Year after year the Church stood back, while they who fought the battle went out from her, and the whole movement against slavery became not only unchurchly but openly infidel, disowning all interest in every presentation of that Christianity of whose spirit and operation it was nevertheless itself the legitimate result. The child Philanthropy not merely deserted

its mother Religion, but disowned her. But, like many another lost child in the world's moral history, its inherited birth-marks, the brow and eyes it took from her, would keep speaking out its parentage in its own despite. If in this year the recreant mother has at all come out and claimed her child; if in this year the Christian Church has taken among us an irrevocable position of hostility to human slavery in every shape, let us thank the Lord. I rejoice in every symptom tending that way. I rejoice in this last struggle, whereby it is fighting its way into its dishonored grave, of that old miserable creature, the most foolish of all follies, if it had not been the most impious of all impieties, which has been dignified so many years with the name of "The Bible Argument for Slavery." I cannot tell you half my joy—some of you will understand it by your own—when in this most conservative of all conservatisms, the Episcopal Church, the reassertion by a Bishop of this same old so-called Bible Argument for Slavery, stirred the ministry of this diocese to an utterance which no man can mistake, of utter enmity to slavery and whatever has anything to do with it. It is of very little importance in the world; it is of very little importance in the land; but it is of very great importance in the Episcopal Church, that, for the first time in her history, she has set herself flatly, fairly, unmistakably against the sin of the nation. As name

after name was added to that Protest; as the assent came in so unanimously from every direction—from the mission chapels in the hills, from the cathedral-churches in the city, from the seats of our schools and our seminary, and above all, thank God, from the honored dignity of the Bishop's chair, made dear by our love for him, who we pray may long sit in it to do true things like this—it seemed to me as if every new assent wiped from the vesture of the Church we love some stain of her long compliance, and gave promise of the day when she shall stand up in her perfect and unsullied excellence, and, wreathing her venerable beauty with an ever-fresh and verdant love for all God's truth, be such a church as there is not in the land.

With regard to that Bible Argument for Slavery, this is not the time to go into it at length. We must take another sermon for that, if it seems necessary. If you want to see it well discussed, take the little Pamphlet of Mr. Goldwin Smith, of Oxford, called, "Does the Bible sanction American Slavery?" and read it. But, if you will not take the time or pains for that, let me just point out to you one fallacy and one contradiction which belong to every attempt to prove that the Bible recognises slavery. The fallacy is in the two meanings of that word, Recognition. Men prove elaborately that the *fact* of bondage is recognised in the Bible, which is

indisputable; and then they jump you over, and tell you that they have proved that the *right* of bondage is recognised in the Bible, which is an entirely different thing, and which they have not proved at all. The contradiction is this: I never found one of these "Bible-argument" men who went far enough to be consistent—never one who did not think that in some future time slavery would be done away, and who did not pretend to be glad of the prospect. Bishop Hopkins has said so himself. Now ask them what they think it is that is thus gradually weakening the hold of human slavery, and they say, the *influence of Christianity*, the operation of the religion of that self-same Bible which has consecrated slavery by sending back Onesimus and cursing the posterity of Ham for ever. How can one keep his notions of religion from most desperate bewilderment, to whom Christianity stands in two such strange representations? Once holding the lifted lash over a cowering woman who cannot, or a proud man who will not work in bondage, and again opening the gradual gates by which that man's and woman's race is passing out into the glory of a freedom to which, by the first plea, it was sacrilege to introduce it.

We are called on, I believe, to accept this new position of the Christian Church to-day, not merely as definite and noble on this special question, but as

promising us in the future a more humane, benignant, Christ-like Church in general. She has broken one chain; she will break all the rest, and come where she belongs, close to the heart and life of every outcast, deep into the bosom of every misery and every sin. It will come slowly, but with all we see to-day, who refuses to believe that it will come at last?

“Oh, heart of mine, keep patience! Looking forth
 As from the Mount of Vision I behold
 Pure, just, and free, the Church of Christ on earth—
 The martyr's dream, the golden age foretold!
 And, found at last, the mystic Graal I see,
 Brimmed with His blessing, pass from lip to lip,
 In sacred pledge of human fellowship;
 And over all the songs of angels hear,—
 Songs of the love that casteth out all fear,—
 Songs of the Gospel of Humanity!
 Lo! in the midst, with the same look he wore,
 Healing and blessing on Gennesaret's shore,
 Folding together, with the all-tender might
 Of His great love, the dark hands and the white,
 Stands the Consoler, soothing every pain,
 Making all burdens light, and breaking every chain!”

And now there are other Mercies of Re-occupation which no one who preaches a Thanksgiving Sermon to-day must forget. I turn away from national mercies, and come home to private lives. Let us sit down together in our own souls, and see if there are not rooms of grace there which we had not been

in for long years, whose rusty doors God has forced to open and let us in this year. Are there none here who have gone into a new chamber, wherein they found a strangeness that bewildered them. Its floors were bare and rough, and hurt the feet; its walls were jagged and untapestried; no regal comfort in its furniture; but yet, bare and bleak as it was, you loved to live in it, because of the strange light that came in at its one eastern window, and touched the stern walls with a softness and a color such as we dream must have been in the poor chamber where the disciples ate of the passover with the Lord. Have none of you, this year, lived in the long-forgotten room of Charity, with its bare walls and hard floor of self-sacrifice, and its eastward window that looked to the everlasting Sacrifice for all? Now and then, in the high impulses of childhood, you crept into it, and found it glorious. Thank God, O men and women, if the Master has led you in again, and let you live there in these holy days!

And have we not all learned to re-occupy another grace which has been unfamiliar—the grace of Hope, of trust in highest principles amid discouragement? We used to know it somewhat years ago. There is a magnificent trust in principles which a child has, which is after all the ideal of the highest manhood. And if we have re-entered it at all; if we are stronger than we used to be, to know that

everything will come out right just because it *ought to*; if the discipline of waiting for God has so drilled our nature into unity with His, that it believes as His does in the inevitableness of principles and truths, and hopes, as His does, by the elastic inspiration of that belief, then we have much to be thankful for in so benignant a re-occupation of one of the holiest chambers of our life. I look beyond this quiet life of ours, and others who have been more blessed, because more tried, have gone far deeper into this holy room of hope than we have. I think of men, our brethren, who have learned hope as they stood waiting in the long dark line of battle; who have clung to truth and to the character of God, to the certainty of the victorious right, when they have had nothing else to cling to; who have been led, as we must all be led, but speedier by the impulse of the fiery life they lived, out of despair in self into the assurance of the Lord. I think of them, and if I could speak to them, I would say, with the reverence I feel for every one of them, Thank God, my brothers, for your hope.

There is a holier re-occupation still, of which we may not speak, but which they know who have been led into it by God. Wherever any heart, long used to happiness, has had to turn aside some day from the war-news it was so carelessly reading, startled by something that it saw, and go apart and enter into

the clouded room of Patience, and sit there thenceforth, waiting till the last Great Revealer should reveal the mystery of the mercy that took some young fresh manhood out of its new usefulness, into what higher usefulness of the other life we know not; wherever any heart, so sitting in the grace of patience, has found itself in sudden sympathy with the patient Christ, and through Him passed into the anticipation of eternal union with the soul that Christ had taken, there is the purest and truest thankfulness God hears to-day.

Our Mercies of Re-occupation—I have tried to show you what the new sort of mercy is for which we are to render thanks to-day. We are not to go back to thank God for revolutionary times. Here are mercies greater than our fathers'; let us thank Him for them. We are completing the preparation for our national life. We are entering on the full enjoyment of the heritage which our fathers and we thus far have but half-used. These days will be the memorable days in American history. "The days come that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel from the lands whither He had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land which I gave unto their fathers."

I stand and look, and lo! the Lord is leading this

people in the great march of re-occupation. Back over the false policies, through the deceitful expediencies, from the wilderness of self-indulgence through which they had been scattered, they gather host on host to go up to the mountain of Jehovah which He has given them to dwell in, back to the simple honesty, the earnest patriotism, and a far better realization of the thought of human liberty, which was the land the Lord God gave their fathers.

Shall we have strength to walk that road? Shall we have courage to keep step with God as He leads us into all that we might be? It is no easy thing for a man to be sure of.

For, first, he who walks the way that God has laid out for this people in these days, must be utterly and wholly loyal; loyal to his country because loyal to his God; out of sympathy with treason, in every shape, in every place, because treason is out of sympathy with truth, because it hinders the re-occupation by his country of its high destiny of union and peace, and the blessings of pure republican government.

And he must be not only loyal, but very free-hearted, teachable, ready to let God lead him into all new, even into all startling truth; ready to see a new race rise into the life of freedom, and accept it and help it to whatever best position its capacities may command.

And to be both of these, he must be full of the spirit of self-sacrifice and charity. He must count not himself dear, no labor too great, no expense too heavy, until the work be done, the Land have entered on the re-occupation of its perfect life.

For these are days that will not die. They are making the thanksgiving days of the years to come. As we go up, following the Lord, into our heritage, it is our privilege, as it was of the men who followed Joshua over Jordan, to stoop in the very bed of the stream and pick up stones of thankfulness which, brought safely over, shall be for all time piled up in our Gilgal, for the memorial of the days when Israel came through the deep waters.

“And Joshua spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over: That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty—that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.”

